

Message Text

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ACTION CA-01

INFO OCT-01 ARA-14 ISO-00 SIG-03 SPTA-02 PPTE-00 H-02
L-03 DODE-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----042522 182008Z /64
O 181934Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8496
INFO PANCANAL
USSOUTHCOM

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PANAMA 06000

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CPAS, PN, CGEN, ASIG, XK, XM
SUBJECT: THE PASSPORT PROBLEM

S/IG FOR CARPENTER
CA FOR MURPHY
ARA/MGT FOR HORSEY

REFS: PANAMA 6208, 21 MARCH 78, PANAMA 5945, 16 AUGUST 78

1. THIS IS THE SECOND OF THREE MESSAGES INTENDED TO FURTHER DEFINE THE MAGNITUDE OF THE CONSULAR WORKLOAD FOR WHICH THE EMBASSY WILL BECOME RESPONSIBLE WHEN THE PANAMA CANAL TREATIES TAKE EFFECT IN 1979. IT HAS BECOME CLEAR IN THE PAST FIVE MONTHS THAT EMBASSY ESTIMATES CONTAINED IN ITS CONSULAR PACKAGE WOULD HAVE TO BE REVISED UPWARD IN THREE CRITICAL AREAS; IMMIGRANT VISAS, PASSPORTS AND FEDERAL BENEFITS. THIS MESSAGE ADDRESSES THE SECOND OF THOSE AREAS, OR, MORE SPECIFICALLY, THE IMPACT OF THE TREATY REQUIREMENT THAT ALL US CIVILIANS RESIDENT IN THE CANAL ZONE WILL HAVE TO HAVE PASSPORTS ON THE DATE THE TREATY BECOMES EFFECTIVE.

2. THE CONSULAR PACKAGE ADDRESSED THIS PROBLEM ONLY
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PERIPHERALLY, AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, DID NOT INCLUDE ITS IMPACT IN THE STATISTICAL WORKLOAD PROJECTIONS. THIS APPROACH WAS BASED ON TWO FACTORS. FIRST, THE VOLUME OF THE PASSPORT SURGE WHICH WOULD BE TRIGGERED BY THE TREATY STIPULATION WAS STILL UNCLEAR AT THAT TIME AND, SECOND, IT WAS ASSUMED THAT -- WHATEVER ITS DIMENSIONS -- THIS PASSPORT SURGE COULD BE CONSIDERABLY DIMINISHED BY

ADVANCE ACTIONS TAKEN TO ASSURE THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF THOSE IN THE ZONE WOULD BE PROVIDED WITH PASSPORTS IN ADVANCE OF THE TREATY'S EFFECTIVE DATE. IT HAS SINCE BECOME CLEAR BOTH THAT THE ORIGINAL WORKLOAD ESTIMATE WAS SUBSTANTIALLY UNDERSTATED AND SECOND THAT THE FIRM PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE (E.G. TYPES OF PASSPORTS TO BE ISSUED) NEEDED TO SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCE THE SIZE OF THE 1979 PASSPORT SURGE HAS BEEN MUCH HARDER TO AGREE UPON THAN THE EMBASSY INITIALLY SUPPOSED.

3. THE CONSULAR PACKAGE CASELOAD ESTIMATE OF 10,000 WAS BASED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE TOTAL NUMBER OF US CITIZENS REQUIRING PASSPORTS WAS 15,000 AND THAT THIS NUMBER COULD BE REDUCED BY 1/3 IF MILITARY DEPENDENTS COMING TO PANAMA IN THE SUMMER REPLACEMENT CYCLE WERE INSTRUCTED TO ARRIVE AT POST ALREADY PASSPORT DOCUMENTED. CONTINUING CONSULTATION WITH SOUTHERN COMMAND AND ZONE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAS PRODUCED INFORMATION INDICATING THAT SOME 25,000 US CITIZENS IN THE CANAL ZONE WILL REQUIRE PASSPORTS PRIOR TO OCTOBER 1979. THOUGH VERY FEW IN THE 1978 SUMMER CYCLE HAVE ARRIVED WITH PASSPORTS, THE EMBASSY IS HOPEFUL THAT THE 5,000 OR SO REPLACEMENTS WHO ARRIVE IN THE 1979 CYCLE WILL BE SO DOCUMENTED -- THUS REDUCING THE TOTAL REQUIREMENT TO 20,000 ISSUANCES. THE WORKLOAD IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH A CASELOAD ARE NONETHELESS MASSIVE. IF THE EMBASSY ITSELF WERE TO PROCESS SUCH UNCLASSIFIED

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A CASELOAD AT ITS PRESENT RATE OF PRODUCTIVITY (.58 - THAT USED IN THE PACKAGE PROJECTIONS) IT WOULD REQUIRE 11,600 MANHOURS, OR 6.4 MAN YEARS TO DO SO. SINCE THE AUGMENTATION WHICH WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR SUCH AN EFFORT IS NOT AVAILABLE TO THE EMBASSY, EITHER AT PRESENT OR AT PACKAGE-PROJECTED FY79 LEVELS, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES A DEPARTMENTALLY-LAUNCHED SPECIAL TEAM WILL BE REQUIRED TO HANDLE 1979'S ONE-TIME SURGE. THIS CONTINGENCY HAS ALREADY BEEN THE SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION BETWEEN EMBASSY AND DEPARTMENT AND THE EMBASSY IS LOOKING FORWARD TO CONTINUING THIS DISCUSSION WITH CA TEAM MEMBERS DURING TEAM'S PRESENCE IN PANAMA NEXT WEEK.

4. EMBASSY REMAINS CONVINCED HOWEVER THAT THE DIMENSIONS OF THE 79 ONE-TIME PASSPORT SURGE STILL CAN BE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED IF FIRM, AGREED IMPLEMENTING INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING WHO WILL GET WHAT KIND OF PASSPORT (I.E. OFFICIAL OR NO FEE) ARE AGREED UPON. UNFORTUNATELY, WE HAVE NOT YET ARRIVED AT THIS JUMP-OFF POINT. AS ALREADY REPORTED TELEPHONICALLY, STATE 173195 TENDED TO SOW UNCERTAINTY AMONG CONCERNED AGENCIES HERE BY STIPULATING THAT DOD CIVILIANS SHOULD RECEIVE OFFICIAL PASSPORTS

WHILE MILITARY DEPENDANTS WOULD NOT. AS DEPARTMENT BY NOW
AWARE, CINCSO HAS OBJECTED TO THIS PROCEDURE THROUGH
JCS CHANNEL (USCINCSO' - 111500Z AUGUST 78). EMBASSY
UNDERSTANDS JCS AND DOD HAVE AGREED SUPPORT CINCSO
POSITION AND WILL RAISE THIS ISSUE THROUGH ISA CHANNEL
IN NEXT FEW DAYS. EMBASSY IS THEREFORE PLEASED TO NOTE
THE PRESENCE ON THE CA TEAM OF PASSPORT OFFICE EXPERTISE,
SINCE THIS ISSUE IS CERTAIN TO ARISE IN DISCUSSIONS HERE
WITH PANCANAL AND CINCSO OFFICIALS DURING TEAM'S VISIT.

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INFO PANCANAL

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5. GIVEN RESOLUTION OF CURRENT CONTRETEMPS, EMBASSY PLANS,
JOINTLY WITH CINCSO AND PANCANAL, TO ADVERTISE AVAILA-
BILITY OF APPROPRIATE PASSPORTS TO THOSE ALREADY IN THE
ZONE WHO DO NOT POSSESS THEM. THOUGH THIS COULD RESULT
IN A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE CONSULAR SECTION'S
WORKLOAD, EMBASSY ESTIMATES THAT IT SHOULD BE ABLE TO
HANDLE UP TO A 100 PERCENT INCREASE IN THE PACKAGE-
PROJECTED CASELOAD OF 3,055 WITH PRESENT STAFFING, GIVEN
THE ASSUMPTION THAT SUCH STAFFING WOULD INCLUDE THE
CONTINUATION OF PIT POSITIONS PRESENTLY ON BOARD FOR ONLY
90 DAYS. EMBASSY HAS ALREADY EXPERIENCED AN UNEXPECTED
RISE IN PASSPORT ISSUANCES, WHICH ARE RUNNING 9 PERCENT
AHEAD OF LAST YEAR'S FOR PERIOD OF MAY-AUGUST. WE
ATTRIBUTE THIS RISE ALMOST ENTIRELY TO CONCERN AMONG MORE
AWARE MEMBERS OF CANAL ZONE COMMUNITY, BUT NOTE THAT TO
THE EXTENT THAT THESE INDIVIDUALS WILL BE ULTIMATELY
REQUIRED TO HOLD OFFICIAL PASSPORTS, THEY WILL REMAIN PART
OF OUR UNRESOLVED PROBLEM. JORDEN

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